

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **State Health Department Reports First Laboratory-Confirmed Influenza Case**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today reported the state's first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza for the 2004-2005 flu season. The resident of McLean County who tested positive for influenza type A was not hospitalized.

Although the state's first flu cases typically are reported in late November or December, it is too early to determine the amount of flu activity North Dakota will experience this season, according to State Medical Officer Craig Lambrecht, M.D. Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

Because of the vaccine shortfall nationwide, the Department of Health is recommending that influenza vaccine be used exclusively for people at high-risk of complications from the flu. In addition, the department is asking healthy people to forgo a flu shot this year.

"With the limited supply of vaccine this year, we want to thank the many healthy North Dakotans who are stepping aside to save flu shots for people at high-risk of complications from influenza," Lambrecht said. "We appreciate their willingness to help protect our most vulnerable citizens."

The Department of Health is coordinating the development of a statewide public information campaign to remind North Dakotans about ways to avoid getting the flu. The campaign will focus on precautions people can take, including washing their hands often, covering their mouths and noses when they cough or sneeze, and staying home from school or work if they are sick.

"It's important to remember that a flu shot is not the only way to prevent the flu," Lambrecht said. "It's up to all of us to prevent the spread of influenza by practicing good health manners this year."

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